

THE SIMPLE LIFE A HUNDRED YEARS
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Mauri Dayton.*

THE SIMPLE LIFE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

My friends:

I am to talk to you of matters one hundred years ago. Does that seem to you a long time? To the younger ones present I have no doubt it seems a century, but if perchance there be any who like the speaker, are nearing the scriptural limit of three score years and ten, when years fly past like telegraph poles by the windows of the express train and memories come at call even more clearly than the events of yesterday, then one hundred years will seem a modest interval.

Few of us may live one hundred years, but two lives may easily span the century and when the younger has been closely associated with the elder for many years and daily heard bits and fragments of early history, then the stories to that younger one clothe themselves in the garb of reality.

Did you ever realize, that every material thing in this world comes from the soil? If indirectly, by not more than one remove. Are you wearing silk? It was evolved by a worm from the mulberry tree, whose roots were in the ground. Is it wool? The sheep grazed the meadow. A diamond? It was dug from the earth. A metal? It came from the mine. Some things come from the sea, but from the earth and sea come all our possessions. I will show how ample is the farm to supply all our needs. I do not say our wants. We might want the moon.

hardly The Simple Life is the title of my talk to you, - a common phrase to which I ~~gladly~~ assent. Each one of you is finding the business of living a complicated one. I will add that it always was. Many things have been simplified for our use ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ in these busy times. A primitive life there was and there is, but a simple life -- never.

When you think of the Simple Life I am sure I can reproduce your mental picture. There will be a pleasant spot in the country. A little farm, -- always a little farm -- and there will be a family cow who will give rich milk, real cream and fresh, home-made butter. There will be a poultry yard where the hens never lay stale eggs, and where every Saturday afternoon two of the daintiest and plumpest young roosters will separate themselves from the flock, strut up to the backyard and jumping upon the chopping block will crow for the cook or the chore-boy to come and get them ready for the Sunday dinner. Oh! There is no place like the country to set the stage for the simple life. Then there must be a fertile spot for a garden where the man of the family or it may be the missus or an out-of-doorsie daughter will raise just the nicest green things. Where the dew never dries off from the lettuce and the string

beans bear so abundantly that one can't help picking too large a mess, and after fifteen delightful minutes on the back porch snapping them into bits you will gather up the corners of your apron and go across the street to your neighbor and say, "My dear Mrs. Brown, wouldn't you like some nice string beans today? You can have them as well as not, for we can't begin to use them all.

Or a few hot dry days will ripen the strawberries faster than they can be used and you will send your little girl down the street to the home of some invalid with a basket of brunette Marshals or to some convalescent with some fragrant Brandywines, and they will be so grateful that you could be elected lady Mayoress in spite of all opposition. To be sure, your generosity is without that sacrifice which is the test of love, but people will not analyse matters very closely and you are bound to be the most popular person in town.

This would be the ideal life, but unfortunately it needs a competence. Anyway the little farm must be paid for, and there should be a surplus in the savings bank to replace the cow that once in a thousand times will get some grass from a spot where the tree warden has been spraying and she will absorb so much arsenate of lead that you will surely need a new cow.

If there is a mortgage on the farm then the hens must pay for their board and houserent and you can't have all the eggs, and about the string beans you will say to Mrs. Brown, "Don't you want to buy some nice vegetables? We will sell them for ever so much a peck, same as they do at the market."

Speaking of eggs reminds me of a woman my mother told about when I was a boy. This woman kept hens, but could not afford to use the eggs when the price was high because they would bring so much money and her family must go without them when eggs were low because it took so many to bring the money.

But it is not my purpose to moralize over the simple life, or to preach a sermon from that text. I am to tell you a story. It will be a true story to the last word. It is the life story of a woman who went to her reward twenty years ago. She was born in 1804, well over one hundred years ago. She lived to be ninety and for the past dozen years was a member of my family. Daily or often I heard fragments and bits of early history. They seemed commonplace enough in the telling and at the time. Only recently have I realized that perhaps if the stories were pieced together in a continuous narrative, it might make a story worth the telling. Of that you may decide. For the purpose of the story I will call her Lucy, because -- Well, because that was her name, or Aunt Lucy, because she was one of a numerous family and had many who had the right to call her Aunt, beside many others who followed a custom common to all New England where certain ones became Aunt or Uncle to a whole village.

Her father's farm was on a hillside in the Green Mountains. She was the oldest of eleven children. You know what happens when the oldest is a girl. She acquires a world of experience long before she grows up. She early acquired all the household arts and crafts, and barnyard craft as well, for to milk the cows. Why! That was a woman's job. It is yet in many cases, even nearby. ~~In a clean milk contest two years ago covering the whole state of Massachusetts the first prize of \$100 and sweepstakes went to a woman who milks the cows herself. Her husband never learned to milk. But that is another story.~~

Lucy was her mother's helper, her mother's companion, and since as I will show she developed a large degree of ability and self-confidence I have no doubt she became her mother's advisor as well. Anyway, when her youngest brother was born she was her mother's sole and only nurse and her father's housekeeper as well. Of course there were other daughters following her footsteps, who could take up some of the duties that she must have temporarily laid aside. I remember at one time when I had grumbled a little over milking two cows she said, "What would you do if you had to milk twenty-eight?" I said I would resign, and did she ever milk twenty-eight? "Yes, sir. My father had that number in milk at one time and there were two of us who milked regularly fourteen each, but sometimes one was away or disabled and the other had all to do." Did any of you ~~milk~~ ever milk a cow? And do you remember when learning that you discovered some muscles that you didn't know you had? Two lines of misery running from the wrist to the elbow? This ache disappears as the cords become hardened, but I think it might return to the toughest arm before the twenty-eight cows were finished.

Such a young woman must minister to the needs of the family in sickness as in health. She must recognize a case of measles and know what to do, and what is quite as important, what not to do. In case of croup -- that insidious malady that requires such instant attention that sending for a doctor by anything less speedy than a telephone was not to be thought of. At such a time Lucy was as efficient as Anne of Green Gables. Did you ever read the story of Green Gables? Of how Anne when the family was in a panic of fear, the slip of a girl took charge, called for the opiate and goose oil or something like that, and her "What to do before the doctor comes" was so efficiently done that the crisis passed ~~with~~ without need of more professional service. Lucy could do all that and did many such things in youth and old age as well.

There was one time when both Lucy and her mother were at fault. Two of the girls came in from play with such unusual ~~symptoms~~ symptoms as to alarm them all. Almira was becoming stupid and inclined to sleep, while Sophie (Sofie), ~~never~~ ever the family cut-up, was cutting up in a fashion as to suggest insanity. The doctor was sent for and when he came he was plainly suspicious. He questioned closely as to diet and what forbidden thing had been within their reach. Lucy remembered that they had been playing near one of the farm buildings and only came in after a half hour of unusual quiet. Going out to investigate she found the cause. one had emptied a jar of run cherries from which the liquid had been withdrawn, and the children had eaten all they wanted.

The doctor slammed his medicine case, advised that if put to bed they would be better in the morning. The incident became one of the family legends. Children came to tell of the time mother or grandma and Aunt Sofie got drunk eating run cherries. The story lives yet and now I am telling it to you one hundred years or more after the event.

Not only was Lucy skillful with her hands, she was strong-minded and inclined to argue and take up ideas in advance of the times, and then her mother would say, "Lucy, Thoe must not put reason before revelation". If the new railroad was a marvel, the telegraph was almost uncanny. It was an old lady over the mountain, or perhaps she was only middle-aged, whose son came home one day breathless with news. He said there were gangs of workmen down in the valley setting a long poles by the railroad track, and they were going to put up a wire fifty miles long. It would reach from Troy to Rutland and when the work was finished they could send a message from one place to the other and get an answer back in three minutes. "Hush! Hush! my son. You must not tell such things. Of course it is not true. If it could be true it would be wicked because it would be outdoing the miracles of Jesus Christ. Don't you ever tell that story again." Can you think of anything that has happened since that time that would shock the pious lady of the mountains?

To spin and weave, to knit, sew, make butter and cheese, were only a few of our Lucy's accomplishments.

- Of course, there came a time when a young man who thought he knew a good thing when he saw it came regularly to call and spend the evening. He met the approval of the old folks, who served him the biggest piece of pie at supper-time. The young folks were married when Lucy was nineteen, and of course she had to have a suitable outfit. You know how such things are done now-a-days. There is a generous check from papa. A high salaried brother is held up, or a well-to-do Aunt will make a donation, or sometimes the girl herself from some lucrative position has fortified her savings bank account especially for the event, and directly there comes a period of spending money like:

" Miss Flora McFlimsey of Madison Square (who)
Made three separate journeys to Paris,
And her husband assures me each time she was there,
She and her friend Mrs. Harris,
Spent fifty consecutive days without stopping
In one continuous round of shopping."

There were no such orgies of money-spending for Lucy. There was no need. Or, to use a slangy phrase, "She didn't have to." The resources of the farm and her own supple fingers were ample.

✓ Her father was disposed to be generous and said, "Lucy, when we shear the sheep you may have all the wool you will spin and weave." So the wool was brought just as it came from the sheep's back and the first operation was to cleanse it. When I take the train at my nearest station I can look down near the salt marsh and see a modern wool-scouring plant,

an extensive affair, receiving wool from the far places of the earth and whitening it for use in the mills. Boards of health do not allow such work inland because it would pollute the rivers, so it must be done at tide water. It is one of the problems of the future to rescue a valuable by-product, a nitrogenous fertilizer sorely needed on our farms now spread under the waters of Massachusetts Bay. Lucy's single handed operations were not likely to pollute the mountain stream or to lose fertility off the farm. She used warm water or hot water and added salt to straighten the fibre and dissolve the kinks. I do not know all the details but I remember about the salt which she also used in laundry work, saying that woollen goods would not shrink if salt were used. I shall get beyond my depth if I try to instruct you in laundry work for I know nothing about it.

When the wool was cleaned it was ready for the card. With a card in each hand it was carded into bats, then separated into rolls. A roll was a fluffy cord something like chenille but larger and capable of being drawn out into yarn, coarse or fine, at the will of the spinner. It is a good spinner who can make a smooth even yarn without bunches or weak places. After it was reeled into skeins it must be colored, or it was made into cloth and dyed afterward. The girl had to know where to find her materials and how to gather and store them. She must know about mordants and the set of colors. It was all laborious, even a critical process, and when the aniline dyes were invented and placed within reach they were very welcome and one of the first innovations adopted on the farm.

She wove the goods for her wedding gown and also for her cloak or outer garment. The cloth for this last was sent away to be treated by machinery, the raising of the nap being one of the few things not done by her own hands. There was yarn for stockings and for mittens, rolls of flannel for blankets and the making of many garments. Everything for which wool could be used she wove and spun. But wool ~~for~~ alone was not enough, and again she levies on the farm. Silk was not to be thought of. There were cottons at the store, but the early cotton goods were high in price. Besides she didn't need them. Her father said, "Lucy, when we harvest the flax you may have all that you can spin and weave." That meant linen. Some of the first processes were recognized as men's work, but it was a very raw material when it came to her hand. She hatched it and combed it and with distaff in hand she sat at the low linen wheel and spun thread for sheets and pillows, towels and table cloths, and material for many garments not of wool. Some red and white checks were woven by one of the neighbors whose loom was fitted up for that particular pattern. Lucy changed work for that service. So she might as well claim to have done it herself. Other things were needed beside cloth. One thing was that abomination of the modern housewife -- a feather bed. It was indispensable. Again she began at the beginning. She got some goose eggs and the goslings were hatched. When they were grown and the harvest was ready she pulled one of her stockings over the heads of the Misses Geese, tucked them under one arm while she plucked the choicest, downiest feathers for her bridal outfit. Of course she had already woven the tick.

At this point in my story I have sometimes had hysterical exclamations over pulling feathers from the living bird. "It was cruel". Where was the society for the prevention of such things? "Why wasn't the goose killed?" I quoted the fable of the goose that laid golden eggs. I asked if my critic ever heard of live goose feathers? Yes, but didn't know it meant that. I explain that every bird has a moulting season when feathers loosen and scatter round the farm. At that time they pull easily and the process is not painful. What did she pull that stocking on for then? Well! One can't explain matters to a goose. Their mandibles are strong and the long neck is full of infinite possibilities in the way of attack. So she took precautions.

Still the bed was not complete. Woven wire springs had not been invented. Nor yet the National, the Excelsior or any of the patented contrivances that we may buy. She needed a bedcord. So she took the coarser parts of flax rejected when she was making the linen -- the tow-- and made her own bedcord, and while she was about it she made a clothes-line. Everything had come from the farm so far. But she was not the only one getting ready for the wedding day. The young man must get ready, too. He must furnish the family munitions. Since he could not telephone the grocer to bring up a bag of flour and a yeast cake with a quart of beans for Saturday, he must needs plow and sow and raise those things for himself. It is said that of all persons the farmer best illustrates the quality of faith -- faith in the purity and viability of his seed, faith that they will sprout and grow, that summer will follow the springtime and the rains nourish and perfect his crops, and while the Mohamadan, contemptuously rejecting the teachings of science, the example of his Christian neighbors and the beneficent improved machinery, still uses the wooden plow drawn by his wife and a mule -- as he devoutly says, "Allah will reward us according to our piety."-- the New England Christian expects reward according to his skill and industry. With faith that the harvest would follow his effort our young man planted his corn, rye, wheat and buckwheat, and when the grain was garnered he took it to the local grist mill to be ground. He did not need to carry his pocketbook, for the miller took two quarts from each bushel for his labor and the farmer took home the rest. "Taking toll", it was called, and I suppose that was the origin of the term that we have applied to many things.

By this time the staple supplies were in the family larder. Milk, butter and cheese were among the commonest of farm products. Eggs, poultry, even turkeys, were common too. A fat hog slaughtered in the fall provided fresh and salt pork, bacon, sausage, hams and shoulders for the smoke-house, and a year's supply of lard. The slaughter of larger animals, as beef, was often a neighborhood affair, the families exchanging in turn a supply of beef to each other. One indispensable product of a steer was tallow for candles, almost the only illuminant of the early days. Can you think of anything else? Why, yes. Sugar. Well, there was the ever generous maple tree, ready in its season with both sugar and syrup, even a light brown dry sugar for the sugar bowl. This last product came only from the most careful and skillful craftswoman, but the subject of our story would make it.

Did I say generous? Not always. The maples could be stingy on occasions. The incident occurred some years later, but there came a poor season when only forty pounds were made. That was all the family had for a year, and what they hadn't got they went without as cheerfully as might be. They could dry down some sweet pumpkin and make syrup from sweet apples, but these were but makeshifts at best. The next year the family made nine hundred pounds and used it all. This was adapting oneself to circumstances as well as living within their income.

The Department of Agriculture has recently demonstrated a new source of sweets from the farm -- watermelon syrup by a process so simple as to be easily made upon the kitchen stove. We of New England are too far north to get any home benefit. Maryland to the Gulf in the melon belt. I have already sent the bulletin to my best lady friend in Texas.

To return to Lucy and her story. Adversity came early into her life. Married at nineteen, she became a widow at twenty-one with one little baby girl. She had already passed through a period of homesickness and loneliness after leaving her father and mother and the lively company of many brothers and sisters. To be sure, they were only a mile or two away, but the strenuous days before the wedding had given way to other strenuous days on the new farm, and now in addition to the cares of motherhood was the care of the farm itself.

Of course it was physically impossible to assume the out-door labors, even though competent to do so, yet no one proposed that she abandon the farm and go home to her mother. She must stay by the farm even as the farm would stay by her. She reduced her livestock to not more than one or two cows and one old horse. But there was one item that was indispensable -- the sheep. They could furnish lambs and mutton, and their wool was necessary to feed the spinning wheel and the loom.

We read much misinformation concerning farm matters, but we will concede this much of truth -- that the sheep industry has disappeared from New England hills. The reason oftentimes given is too many dogs. This too, is measurable correct, though there are other causes. One hundred years ago the dogs were farm trained and were not a menace, but there was something worse -- wolves, still common in the mountain forest. It was common enough to see almost any day, one or two or more crossing the open within sight of the farmhouse.

It was a fearsome sound in the night to hear the wolves worrying and killing the sheep. The use of firearms was not one of Lucy's accomplishments and there was nothing available but the old-time cumbersome flint-lock. Wolves, though dangerous at night, were cowards by day, so she could only wait for the morning. Daylight comes early in midsummer and three o'clock would find her at the pasture bars calling her flock, while dark forms were slinking away to the timber. Some sheep were dead and more were torn. All that could do so would follow her home to the fold where she could attend to their hurts to the exclusion of all but the most imperative duties of the day.

Bears were not very troublesome. A well-fed bear in berrytime was never feared. They would give way to pickers and disappear.

I remember at one time reading aloud from the daily paper of the performance of some circus animals, where the reporter had ventured to add that none but a trained bear would walk upright and carry anything in his arms. At this Aunt Lucy became very contemptuous. She had seen a wild bear take a cosset from her own dooryard and walk upright with her lamb in her arms. In that case I believe a posse was formed and although they could not and did not expect to rescue the lamb they did get the bear, and I suppose the neighborhood lived on bear steak for a while and somebody got material for an automobile coat.

For six years the subject of our story lived alone with her little girl, supporting the farm which in turn supported her. Then she married again.

Of the twenty-five years or so that followed I have little to record. The years seem to have been uneventful as to important happenings. Two more children were born, making three, one of which died in infancy, while the oldest lived to marry and have a family -- yet she died before my time. I have heard the husband tell of a one-time trip to Boston driving over the mountains with a load of Vermont produce, commissioned by the townspeople to bring back goods from the city, a bit of amateur expressing taking a week each way over the road. Sometime in the eighteen-fifties the railroad was built up through that valley from Troy to Rutland. The farm was sold and a move made to the valley where the husband became the first station agent at that town, a position quite to his taste it maybe, having some degree of scholarly taste and having been a school teacher earlier in life.

Once again disaster came to Lucy when her husband was severely injured by a freight train. He became crippled for life, unable to do much for the family support. He had a good garden, using his knee for a crutch. Also he could help in the house. But the breadwinning and money-making fell to her who had already proved her efficiency in the way of doing things. Again the old loom became her chief reliance. Homespun cloth had already given way to a factory-made goods, but carpet work and rugs -- rag -- carpeting -- was even more in demand than ever. There were many weavers but skilful work brought all the work she could do. She could weave three yards a day and received twenty cents a yard, the material being furnished ready for the shuttle. Some smart young weavers could weave more, one woman boasting that she could weave ten yards each day, but it was said that chairlegs would find a way to the floor through the loosely made cloth. We have reached a period within my own memory. In my annual vacation visits I almost learned to weave. I invented an improved shuttle and made many of them in a nearby carpenter-shop. They were widely copied, too.

Just here I will introduce another character into my story, and yet for the moment closely connected with it. It will be a study in economics. Our people were living in a white cottage in the South Village and directly across the street lived Mrs. Roberts in a comfortable and carefree old age.

A grandson was running the old farm and his wife looked after the household, and the old lady puttered around the house doing as much or as little as she chose. She could sit in her easy chair on the porch in summer or by the stove in winter. I remember that one pastime was to make some small cheeses in the fall. The cheese factory had long since relieved the farmer's wife of the arduous business of cheesemaking. But the factory had not then added the butter making, and cheese alone was a summer enterprise, - a matter of warm temperature. So the factory shut down when cool weather came on and the milk was thrown back to the farm dairy. It was much lessened in quantity. The farm work was planned to that end. So Mrs. Roberts made cheese, small ones they were, not more than ten to fifteen pounds each. I used to see them on the floor behind the kitchen stove, and I am sure they were delicious beyond any that we can buy, for few cheesemakers make cheese as good as they know how. It is made to reach an early market and to save money for the stockholders. But that is another story and I must not go further astray. Mrs. Roberts used to come over to sit by Aunt Lucy at her weaving. One day she said, "I wish I could have one more piece of homespun flannel such as we used to make. When George sells his wool to the carding mill people, I could get him to bring home rolls enough and I think I could spin the yarn for warp and filling, but I don't feel equal to the weaving. Would you weave it if I get the material all ready?" Aunt Lucy said she would. "How much would you charge for weaving? You know we used to have twelve cents a yard." "Yes, I know, but we were not paid in money. We used to weave a yard of cloth for a pound of butter. I will do it for that now." Mercy! Butter was thirty cents a pound and -- well -- they couldn't trade. You will readily see why. The competition of fast machinery has reduced the labor cost of weaving to a cent a yard or less. While the butter cost still depends upon the bodily processes of the cow. Much improvement has been made at that end, too. There are improved breeds. Feed problems have been solved. The silo provides cheap rations for the winter. But the most that has been accomplished ^{has been} to prevent the price of butter from going to a dollar or something like that per pound.

At the age of seventy-five Aunt Lucy again became a widow. Her husband had been an invalid for many years, but yet the final event came suddenly. We had been home only two weeks when a telegram recalled us. No permanent plans could be made in the few days that we could spare from my own home duties. We brought her here to Massachusetts for the winter. She was fairly content, but only because she looked forward to an early return. In the spring she went back to the Green Mountains alone, opened up the cottage and resumed her weaving. She was pretty well. The neighbors were good, also they lived near -- very near. She wrote often and would put ~~thousands of~~ more words on a postal card than any of you will put in a four page letter. It was like writing the Lords Prayer in the space of a dime.

Life ran smoothly as she approached her ~~ninth~~ eightieth year. We made annual visits and she continued an active life. She picked wild berries on the mountains which she put in cans always for others than herself. She dried apples in the fall by a process of her own, novel and unheard of by anyone present, I believe.

Although her life was running smoothly the neighbors kept urging that some change should be made. Living alone there was continual danger of accident and emergency in spite of all the oversight that they so willingly gave. The obvious thing to do was to bring her to Massachusetts, for we could not go to her. I went alone for the disheartening duties of selling the cottage and packing her things for the journey. Only once did she give voice to her feelings -- that she never wanted to see the mountains again for she could never stand the strain of leaving again. In anticipation of a period of homesickness it seemed that if we brought all her furnishings she might feel more contented in the new home. She protested the loom as never to be used again, but I had hired a car and reasoned the railroad people might as well earn their money. The relatives loaned their teams and gave their services and we loaded the old rocking chair, the spinning wheel, the scorns, the winders and every other last thing. I unloaded that car myself, using my own horse. I confess to choosing the dusk and a moonlight evening for some things to avoid the too curious eyes of people by the way. I had built a new dwelling and we filled it in part with the things we had brought, worn and shabby though many of them were.

How homesick she was we never knew. Strong willed always, she kept her feelings in control. Something to do was the obvious remedy for homesickness and she was given carte-blanche as to how she would spend her time. She took better care of my strawberry bed than it had had before or since. She used the loom too, wove carpeting by the hundred yards, a good deal more than one hundred anyway.

After two years one of her brothers sent an urgent invitation to come to his Golden Wedding and although she had said she never would go back, yet she did and she went alone, after being escorted to the old Fitchburg Station and seated in a Hoosac Tunnel train. Arrived at the old home town she could see every dwelling in the narrow valley. The railroad divided her old garden in two parts and at one point she saw her brother standing by his buggy watching for a signal which she did not give. "Didn't you see me, Lucy, with the horse all ready?" "Yes, I saw you all right, but I wanted to walk up. You may go and get my things. " It was about a mile.

She received an ovation as she walked through the village, recognized from every window and dooryard. She stayed two or three weeks, went everywhere, saw everybody, and came back perfectly content. It is said always to work that way, - to endure a period of grief, to go back once, and at the second leaving all homesickness has gone. She went back and forth several times after that. Why no - - not quite so many as that, but at two or three year intervals. Usually someone went with her at least part way.

It was in the month of her ninetieth birthday that I, having got through with the harvest and fall work, proposed a vacation trip for myself alone. I would go to the mountains to see the folks. Aunt Lucy's hearing had failed and she did not immediately learn of my plans. When she did she said, "If anyone goes to Vermont I'm going too. I really thought she was joking and said little but there were unmistakable signs of getting

ready. She went. She had everything she needed except rubbers. She must have the old-fashioned kind without heels, not to be had near home and probably not at the journey's end. We must contrive to pick them up while crossing the city. I tried to dicker with a hackman. Double fare. There was a compelling pull at my sleeve. "Come along, you needn't pay that man a dollar for me". We walked to the store of Jordan and Marsh, made our purchase and boarded a street car for the Fitchburg Station. She made the journey comfortably and once again she went everywhere and saw everybody. Called on the people living in her old home. She reckoned up thirty places where she called or visited beside receiving dozens of callers at every stopping place.

One of life's principal activities I have not yet mentioned. At all times she was the District Nurse. That wasn't what they called it. I guess she had no name for it. By way of leading up to this part of my story, let me tell an incident in my own experience. For twenty years or so of middle life I was a florist in a small way and was often called to deliver floral work on funeral occasions. At a village about two miles away I always found an old lady in charge. One day I said, "Mrs. Loring, I always find you at such times as this!" "Yes," she answered, "this is the eightieth of my neighbors that I have in my lifetime prepared for burial." And yet she was not the undertaker nor the undertaker, nor the undertaker's assistant. Those were days when the undertaker did little after delivery of the casket. I told about Mrs. Loring when I got home, and Aunt Lucy said she had done such things for her own folks and sometimes for a neighbor, but it was not often expected of her. However, she said, this, "I haven't any record, but I know I have received many more than eighty bodies into the world." This then was her province, as it was to attend upon every malady that afflicted the country side. If a laborer jammed his hand in the marble quarry he was quite as likely to run to Aunt Lucy as to the doctor. Summons were often sudden, sometimes instant, as when a man somewhat wild about the eyes burst in to say, "Oh, Aunt Lucy, can't you come down to our house quick, the baby is almost born and nobody around but just me."

Though her hands were in the dough dish she must run. No time to put on a frilly cap, she didn't have one, -- nor yet a white gown. Very likely no doctor was expected. They had never heard of a bacillus, and like you and me, they had never seen a germ. They took none of those elaborate sanitary precautions that are considered so necessary now-a-days. The good sense of the patient and long experience of the nurse were relied upon, and it seldom failed to bring a successful outcome. For a lifetime of service she may never have received a dollar in money. She had the gratitude and good will of all the world. She never questioned whether she was doing more than her share of the world's work or not. Her life exemplified the motto of the Socialist, "To everyone according to his need, from everyone according to his ability." It was a long and busy life, but it wasn't a SIMPLE LIFE, was it?